

On page 4, line 3, before "The coating composition according to the present invention" insert on a new line the heading

--SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION--

On page 4 line 11, before "The binder is most preferably" insert on a new line the heading

--DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION--

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

We Claim

1. A composition for coating a metal substrate which is intended to be fabricated and overcoated, said composition comprising a silica or silicate binder, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio of at least 6:1, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, and wherein the silica or silicate particles have an average size equal to or smaller than 10 nm.
2. The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the binder is a silica sol of $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio at least 25:1.
3. The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous solution of an alkali metal or ammonium silicate stabilized by a siliconate substituted by at least one anionic group of lower pKa than silicic acid, having a pH of 7 to 10.5 prepared by lowering the pH of a solution of silicate and siliconate by ion exchange.

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4. The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the coating composition further comprises zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy.
5. The coating composition according to claims 1, wherein the silica particles have an average size in the range 3 nm to 10 nm.
6. The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the binder further comprises a silane coupling agent.
7. The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein the binder further comprises an organic resin.
8. The coating composition according to claim 1, wherein it is a water-based shop primer.
9. A Water-based shop primer for the coating of steel substrates which are intended to be fabricated and overcoated, said composition having a solid content of 20 - 40 % by volume, comprising:
 - an aqueous silica sol or alkali metal silicate binder having a $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$ mole ratio of at least 6:1, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, and wherein the silica or silicate particles have an average size equal to or smaller than 10 nm,
 - 10 - 90 % by volume of the coating on a dry film basis of zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy having a mean particle size in the range 2 to 12 μm ,
 - 0 - 35 % by weight, based on silica or silicate, of an organic resin,
 - 0 - 30 % by weight, based on silica or silicate, of a silane coupling agent,
 - optionally non-zinc pigment(s) having a mean particle size below 3 μm , and
 - optionally a pot-life extender.